



# Newsletter

## Spring 2024

### Our Annual meeting of supporters:

Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2024 10am by  
zoom

Please join our annual meeting on Saturday morning 6<sup>th</sup> July. It will include reports from trustees who have visited the project and provide an opportunity to meet staff who work on the project and the children and young people who benefit from your support. This is the link to join:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89853691116?pwd=dUJ6bDhjaEVVcDhhMTVFSUxoOXBOQT09>

Meeting ID: 898 5369 1116  
Passcode: 297067

### Join Our legacy trek-

Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> September 10am



Our next virtual trek will be a visit to centres we have built using funds left to us in legacies. Join us on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> September 10am using this zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84705793832?pwd=eUs2MvV5R25BU2Y4NDNDRERGRGdydz09>

Meeting ID: 847 0579 3832  
Passcode: 060720

### Celebrating 40 years of the Khasdobir Project by Kathleen Jackson

After several years of working with ToCH in the east end of London with young men newly arrived from Bangladesh, Peter East took early retirement in 1983 to work with young men in Sylhet. After meeting local businessman Harun Ahmed in early 1984, a shared belief in educating and training young people led to a strong and lasting partnership.

During the severe floods in 1984, some small children were encouraged to sit with older boys who began teaching them letters and numbers. This was the beginning of Schools Under the Sky (SUS). These schools were sited in areas of extreme poverty where day labourers, tea estate workers and rickshaw pullers lived, all only paid on a daily basis when they could find work.

As numbers grew, more SUS opened, and each year a high proportion of children moved on to local primary schools to continue their education.

The work at Khasdobir expanded to include a sewing workshop for young women who, after training, would earn money to support their families.

Peter had always felt deeply about the plight of widows who had no means of support. In a country that had no welfare benefits, some 80 widows were given a tiny amount of money each month to help buy food or medicines.

My visit this year was to look at the enormous changes that have taken place since those early days. Since 2018 the project has been managed by SJA (Sylhet Jubo Academy), There are no more open air schools, but 12 purpose built shelters, colourfully decorated to attract young children, with space to play and good resources. Teachers are well trained and the standard of teaching is very high. All schools have electricity and toilet facilities. Some of the shelters are now being used for computer classes and sewing workshops, enabling community access to a shared facility.

It was a great privilege to meet some adults who had begun their education at SUS and were now in positions of responsibility in various types of employment, including a police officer who is in the diplomatic protection unit. Without that initial support from Khasdobir, what would their future have been?

*Below Kathleen with the Headteacher of Khasdobir primary school and displaying work by our trainees.*



Chairman  
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Web Site

Mike Sherriff  
Phil Watson, April Cottage, 12, Church Street, Rothley, Leicestershire, LE7 7PD  
The Rt. Hon the Baroness Morgan of Cotes; Rt. Hon Sir Kevin Barron  
[www.khasdobir.org.uk](http://www.khasdobir.org.uk) Registered charity number 1185262

## Sewing machine presentation

During the recent visit by trustees we were pleased to present a sewing machine to one of the young women who has completed the sewing course. She hopes to share her expertise with other women at one of our centres. The sewing machine was paid for by a very generous donation from Dawn Pool, a friend of Phil, one of our trustees. Dawn is delighted to know it has gone to such a good cause and hopes it will make a significant difference to the recipients life.



## Pass it on

We circulate our newsletter by post and email. After you have read your copy please consider passing it on or forwarding the email to friends and family who might be interested in the project. Please encourage them to contact us to be added to the list for receiving the newsletter.

**Please donate** to support our work using this link:  
<https://www.peoplesfundraising.com/donation/friends-of-khasdobir>

## Report on the 2024 trustee visit to the project by Phil and Doreen Watson

Having visited the project many times before we looked forward to renewing friendships with the wonderful group of people who run the project on our behalf – the staff of Sylhet Jubo Academy, the teachers and trainers, the outreach workers and the delightful members of the communities we serve. We were fortunate in benefiting from 12 days of glorious weather with temperatures around 24C and no rain! We were very busy! Starting with 8 o'clock breakfast at the Rainbow Hotel we travelled each day through the manic streets of Sylhet with crazy CNG drivers(!) to all 12 schools, joined the outreach teams as they visited the slums and tea gardens supporting locals in obtaining documentation such as birth certificates or benefit claims, and met with parents and local interest groups. One new event was the fundraising cricket tournament in which the star qualities of Doreen and our Chair, Mike received rapturous applause! We found the quality of teaching has improved beyond recognition since our last visit, with several outstanding examples of variety, student engagement and fun based learning activities. The classrooms/shelters we have built provide a light and stimulating learning environment, in strong contrast to the more formal pre-primary schools provided by the Government. The outreach workers have established excellent relationships with their communities who, it is clear, have come to trust and welcome the help and support they provide. It was encouraging to see that some local people have become involved in the management of the shelters – this is so important as the future will rely on local communities taking ownership of the schools and community activities. We were, as always, struck by the extraordinary generosity of the people we spent time with, from Mukta's wonderful lunches in the office, to the many offers we had to enjoy home cooking and the gifts that were showered upon us. The project is in a very healthy place, our challenge now is to find a way of securing the long-term future of the outstanding work we witnessed. The project must, in time, be self-sustaining. We can see possibilities, but we have a long way to go before we can be confident this has been achieved.

*Below: Doreen joins a game of Ludo -at a centre fundraising event*



## We are looking for new trustees

We are a small charity that has been supporting the Khasdobir Project in Sylhet for 40 years. We are always looking for people interested in joining our committee, which meets 3-4 times a year. The duties of a trustee are described here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/charity-trustee-whats-involved> If you, or somebody you know, would be interested in joining us then please email us at: [khasdobir@btinternet.com](mailto:khasdobir@btinternet.com)

## Distribution of winter clothes to children

In the winter season in Bangladesh it can be quite cold, with temperatures falling as low as 3 or 4 degrees accompanied by a chilly breeze. None of the families we work with have heating in their homes and the houses are often built with bamboo and tin, with no insulation available. In winter extra clothes and blankets are needed by families, especially on the tea gardens, to keep warm.



This year we were pleased that the former students of the school batch attended by our Project Manager donated clothes for the children at two schools on the tea gardens.

The children and guardians were delighted with the clothes, which helped keep them warm during the recent cold weather.



## Computer class student opens new shop

Emon is 22 years old. He lives in the part of the Lakkatura tea garden in Sylhet where most of the families originally came from Comilla. Mainly after the Bangladesh war of independence in 1971.

Emon's father is dead, and his mother works on the tea garden. He has two sisters who are married. They have now left home and live in Jafflong. Emon lives alone with his mother.

He attended Sylhet Government College, a Government High School, and Khasdobir Primary School. As a young child he went to our Bashbari School Under the Sky.

Emon started the computer class at the Project Office in February 2023. He thought it was a very good class. He first learnt Word, Excel and Powerpoint and then graphics. He is now learning how to use Illustrator.

Emon had a dream since childhood to start a business but because of his circumstances he could not do so. Through SJA and funds from Muslim Charity he got the opportunity to start a shop selling stationery and assisting people on the tea estate with filling in forms, such as applications for college admission, and accessing services where it is necessary to use a computer.

The shop is located in a row with other shops such as a barber and grocery. It started on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2024 and is open 9am to 2pm daily and 3pm to 10pm. Emon runs the shop alone.

Emon plays cricket, badminton, and football. He enjoys listening to music too. His shop is five minutes walk from his home, in an adjacent part of the Lakkatura tea garden, where most families originated from Barisal, another part of Bangladesh.

Emon hopes in future to open more shops and to employ some other young people such as those who currently attend the computer class.

*Below Emon at his recently opened shop*



If you receive your newsletter by post and we do not currently have your email address it would be extremely helpful if you could provide it to us so that we can communicate with you occasionally about our various on-line events using email. It is still possible to receive a paper version of the newsletter. If you want to stop receiving a paper version of the newsletter and just receive an email copy, then please let us know. You can contact us at: [khasdobir@btinternet.com](mailto:khasdobir@btinternet.com)

# ***YES, I'd like to help...***

*1 Friends of Khasdobir, Bangladesh Registered Charity No. 1185262*

## **2 Gift Aid Declaration**

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**I am a U.K. taxpayer, and wish the charity to treat all donations that I make as Gift Aid donations from the date below, so that the tax I have paid on those sums can be recovered by them.**

Name, including Mr, Mrs, Miss or Ms, and first name

.....

Full Address .....

.....

Postcode ..... Date .....

Signed .....

E-mail Address (optional) .....

**Notes:**

**This declaration is in force from the above date until it is cancelled. It need only be made once.**

**I confirm that have paid or will pay an amount of income tax and/or capital gains tax (added together) for the current and each following year; 6<sup>th</sup> April to 5<sup>th</sup> April, until further notice, that is at least equal to the amount of all the tax that the charities and Community Amateur Sports Clubs that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts each tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand that The Friends of Khasdobir charity will reclaim the tax on my donations to them.**

**If your financial circumstances change, and you cease to pay income tax or capital gains tax at a level at least equal to the sum that you donate to all charities and CASCs each year, then please let the charity know by writing to the Treasurer.**